

AN OBJECTION AND AN ANSWER

NO. 1280

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything,
nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love.”
Galatians 5:6.*

THE most prominent doctrine in Paul's teaching was that of justification by faith. He taught it so very plainly, so very boldly—I almost said so very baldly—that it seemed necessary to the Holy Spirit that James should bear testimony to the necessity of holiness as the result of faith. Hence the Epistle of James is put into the sacred canon lest any should wrest and twist the language of Paul from its proper meaning. His great teaching—anybody can see this with half an eye—the great teaching of Paul is that we are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. This doctrine has always been taught in the church of God, and it is, as Luther well put it, the standing or falling article—the test of a standing or a falling church. A church which holds this doctrine in its integrity, notwithstanding many errors, is still a church of Christ, but the church which denies this, whatever else it may hold, is against Christ, and is not a church of Christ at all! The great Reformation, for which we so often bless God, was brought about by this light of God, for the truth of God which had been hidden in darkness, was held forth in the preaching and teaching of Protestant reformers. But for a long time after those eminent men had departed, the testimony of all the Protestant churches to justification by faith was clear and unwavering. You can scarcely read a sermon of any of the immediate successors of the reformers, but you will find it filled with the doctrine that man is justified through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, by faith in Him, and *not* by the works of the law. It was the same testimony which produced the revival in the last century, when Whitefield and Wesley awoke the slumbering masses of our population as they went forth through every town and hamlet preaching the gospel. Whatever difference there might have been between those eminent evangelists and their followers, they did not differ at all upon this point—that men are saved by believing in Jesus Christ—by resting upon the atonement once offered for human sin upon the bloody tree of Calvary.

And I rejoice, dear friends that this doctrine was never more clearly preached than now! As the time of the singing of birds has come, and the churches are waking up and expecting a blessed springtide, I thank God that there is this sign of its being a truthful work! Among other gracious signs it is conspicuous that Jesus Christ is preached, and that faith in Him is declared to be of paramount importance. That it is so is evident from the opposition which has been awakened! I can hear the voice of the old growler—he is a gentleman that never has been absent when the banner of Christ has been unfurled; he is again beginning to whine and snarl as he always did, and to bark at this doctrine, in particular, as not according to holiness, subversive of morality, and mischievous in all its tendencies! I shall not attempt to stop his growling; his temper tells its own tale! He and his cronies do but display their natural disposition; if dogs delight to bark and bite, Dr. Watts has taught us to let them do so, “for ‘tis their nature, too.” I am not thinking of the cynical skeptic just now—my aim is to meet the *sincere seeker*. This objection takes the form of a difficulty in the minds of some who are anxious to find salvation; they say to themselves, “Can it be so? Is it possible that by simply *believing* on Christ my soul can be saved? I can comprehend that this might be made a condition upon which God should pardon me, but that is not all I need; I need a new heart; I need a right spirit! It would be of little use for me merely to have my past sins forgiven; I need to become a better man! The salvation that I need is salvation from my sins, from temptations in the world, and from the uprisings of my own naturally depraved heart; if I cannot get that, the mere pardon of sin is a very small business. However, I can understand that God would pardon me upon my believing in Jesus, but what I need to know is what effect my believing in Jesus will have upon *me* personally—what change would accrue to my nature as the result of my believing.”

It is about that I want to talk—faith which works—faith which works! And I want to show something about *how* it works. It works “by love.” To begin, then, I shall first attempt to answer the inquiry, “What is the faith which saves the soul?” And I venture to answer the question, first, by saying that it does not differ as a mental act from any other kind of believing. I fully admit that there is much about faith that is mysterious, and of that I may speak presently, but if any man asked me what the act of believing is, I should not hesitate to reply, “I believe God just the same as I believe anybody else—believe Him as I believe my father, as I believe my mother, as I believe my wife. It is the same mind which believes, and it is the same act of the mind that comes into operation. It is a rational assent. Faith is to believe what God says, to take it to be true, real, a matter of fact.” Now, when I believe what a man tells me, I do not say to myself, “Well, that is now a piece of my creed,” and so put it on the shelf, and have done with it! A man tells me, for instance, in the middle of the night, that my house is on fire. You know what I should do! You know what *you* would do! You know what any sane man would do! But when you are told in God’s Word that you are in danger of His wrath to come, do you believe what you read? No, you do not, or you would not be as cool as you now are! Your imminent peril should prompt instant action.

I would to God that what men call faith in a religious point of view were as prompt in its proceedings as the common acts of faith which they exercise towards their fellow men! The fact is, the creed we profess comes often far—very far *short* of the credit we give to our fellow creatures about the common affairs of life. Do you want to be saved? Believe God as you would believe the one that told you that your house was on fire! Believe God as you would believe your friend—believe Him actively, really, truly, *for that is faith*. God tells you that you have transgressed against Him, but that He wills not your death, and that He has sent His Son into the world to suffer in the place of sinners, and that if you rely upon His Son you shall have immediate forgiveness, and shall be saved. Believe that message! Believe it to be true! You ought to believe it, for God cannot lie! It is an indisputable fact that whatever God says stands good; it is not contingent upon anything but His will, and He is without variableness or shadow of turning; what He says He means! Believe Him, whom you have not seen, as you would believe anyone whom you see daily; give credit to the Word He has written as you would credit any word that is spoken to you, and if you do so believe, your faith will then resolve itself into an act of reliance. If I believe a man when I am in trouble, and he says, “Now, sir, leave that with me; I will get you through”—I rely upon him to do it! I leave the matter in his hands and go my way.

This is the very core of saving faith. It is to say, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; I am a sinner; I will trust Him to save me. He, on the cross, made expiation for me, and I am at peace. My heart rests on the atonement which He has offered.” It is dependence, reliance, or as the old Puritans used to say, “recumbency”—leaning upon a friend because I have ceased to rely on myself. If He takes the burden, I stand aloof; His the weight, mine the relief, free from pressure, free from anxiety! That is faith; easy, artless faith; self-renouncing, God-honoring faith! It is unequivocal faith; faith taken in the simple common acceptance of the word, of the act, of the feeling; the very core, marrow, essence, soul of faith is reliance upon Jesus Christ, once offered for human sin, and now gone, covered with glory, up to the right hand of God to represent sinners within the veil! And this reliance, wherever it is true, may also be described as an acceptance of what God has set forth as a propitiation for sin; God has given His Son. Let me put it in other words; God Himself, because He could not tarnish His Justice, has descended to earth and taken up our nature—He has worn the clay garb of our humanity. God Himself has suffered, has died upon the cross as if He had been guilty; the judge has taken the culprit’s place and borne the vengeance due to the offender. He says, “Will you accept My substitution? Shall it be so? Are you willing that I should be in your place, that you may be in Mine?”

Sinner, I ask you now, and let your *heart* reply—are you willing that the scourging of Christ should be in the place of your being scourged? Are you agreeable that by His stripes you may be healed? Are you willing that His blood should be shed instead of your blood—His death instead of your eternal death? You say—

*“My faith does lay her hand
On that dear head of Yours,
While like a penitent I stand*

And here confess my sin.

You Say, “I am all too glad to take this Substitute, this blessed substitute, and to accept God’s way of salvation.” Very well! You are saved then and there! Believing God’s testimony, relying on God’s Son, accepting God’s way of salvation—that is the faith that saves the soul! That is not faith which says, “I am saved because I believe I am.” That may be a lie. It is not a faith that says, “I feel so happy, and therefore I am saved.” There are a great many who feel very happy, indeed, who will be lost! No, it is a faith that goes upon *principles*, upon the *truths of God* written in Scripture—neither upon excitement nor upon *feelings*! God gives Christ to save men, and Christ saves all who trust Him. I trust Him, therefore He saves me. I believe *God gave me* that trust; therefore I give all the glory to God! Having no works to boast of, I confess that I am saved through what Jesus did on my behalf! That is my first direction for your first dilemma.

I want to answer a few objections against this being the way of salvation. Let me ask you, however, what on earth is the good of your objecting? If God has made this to be *the way* of salvation, your best plan is to accept it; what good will your objections do? “Can I not do as I will with My own?” would be God’s response to your impertinence! As surely as this book is God’s Word, so surely are we taught there that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: he that believes not shall be damned.” Now it is no use your kicking against it! There it stands and it will not be altered for anyone. Were this city starving, and a man of wealth were to bring in bread and distribute it, any regulations he chose to make for the distribution, he surely would have a right to enforce! Nobody ought to quibble at it. God has made and fixed this fast and firm—there is no other salvation. “There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.” Man, woman, do not object! We sometimes say to boys who go out to business, and do not like the work, “It is no use quarrelling with your bread and butter.” Surely the available supply of actual necessities ought to silence every murmur. What profit, I pray, sir, can you expect to come of quibbling at God’s covenant, or challenging the propriety of His salvation which He has prepared before the face of all people? God has fixed it! He will not alter the thing that has gone out of His mouth; leave your objections for something else! Write to the newspapers, if you please, about some public grievance, but to impugn with indignation, or bemoan with bitter complaints God’s way of salvation must be the most unprofitable, not to say the most impertinent and wicked way of wasting time! It is alleged that when we tell men to believe in Jesus and they will be saved, they will go on in sin—they will despise good works—they will, perhaps, grow immoral! The answer is this: *do they? Do they?* I quoted a very homely proverb just now. I will quote another quite as homely. “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” And truly the proof of the doctrine is in the practical results!

Do the people that believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, renouncing all trust in their good works, plunge deeper into sin and make this a reason for licentiousness? Answer honestly. Turn to the pages of history, and see on a large scale the aspect of society. What do you think of the cavaliers of King Charles’s day? They certainly were not believers in justification by faith! I do not know, exactly, what they *did* believe in, but I suppose had there been a preacher of good works, and the whole duty of man who adorned moral essays with graceful language, sparkling wit, and aphorisms from heathen authors, these gallant gentlemen would have listened to the court preacher with a listless satisfaction, and gone home to their ladies to tell what a profitable sermon they had heard! But where do you look for social virtue among men, holy living before God, and noble sacrifices for the public good? Why, among your Puritans! Among the rough men that would do anything *but* sin, who feared no man’s face in the day of battle, and who feared God in the sanctities of their private chambers and the secret recesses of their own hearts! Around Cromwell’s campfires at night there may be many disputes about doctrines, but never a dispute about this question—that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ! All the world knows that the men who cry up good works have not got any stock in hand, or even a *sample* to show—while those who preach up faith in Jesus Christ are the very people whose biographies will bear to be written, and who exhibit the very works which this doctrine is supposed to destroy! Judge, therefore, by facts!

But if the doctrine of faith is such a wonderfully easy way of salvation, and when it is accepted men just go on as they did before, why do not all the licentious people receive it? Why do you not hear in the theater and the saloon the song sung—

***“I do believe—I will believe—
That Jesus died for me”?***

If free grace is such a potent factor in the merchandise of free living, why not introduce it more freely among your harlots? Why does it not find favor among the gay and giddy, the fast and frivolous? Do men do that? No! Because the world knows that our *faith* will not blend with their *filth*! If any man among you would like to come up here and say, “I for one believe in Jesus Christ, and yet I lead a licentious life,” he would become known as a hypocrite among the sensuous and the Sybarites! It is all very well to bribe false witnesses who say that it leads to that, but you know it does not! The licentious are the last persons to talk about the atonement of Jesus Christ! Yet if it were so, if the expiation of Christ pleased in ever so small a degree, the Epicurean of the world, it would surely be one of the doctrines which the self-indulgent would seize upon with the greatest eagerness! No, sir, the man that lives in vice, and violates every precept of the Decalogue is just the man to make conscience of going on Good Friday to his church—there he takes the sacrament, and believes that he, somehow or other, gets absolution! At our Agricultural Hall services, and noonday prayer meetings, they will sneer because, they say, it is encouraging hypocrisy instead of putting down immorality, and so on. Yes, we know where the talk comes from—from men who lack a morality of their own! If they were to look at their true lives it would suffice.

Again, suppose we were to change the system of preaching, and preach that men were to be saved by good works—entirely by what they *did*? You say, “That would set them working!” Perhaps it would, or perhaps it would not—most likely the *latter*, for as a general rule it never has produced much result. Dr. Chalmers’ experience was that he preached morality till he had not any moral people left—and he did not see anybody converted to Jesus Christ. I believe you may preach against sin, but if you do not at the same time proclaim the way of salvation, you prevent shame, and leave men accusing one another and excusing themselves! Your model sermons would become monstrous travesties of honesty; in plain English, you would be preaching up *selfishness*! You say to these people, “Do this, that you may be saved.” What is, then, to be the objective of their life? *Self*-salvation! That is the one thing they are to live for—that they may somehow *merit* heaven. But it would be a doctrine that would pay extremely well! If you happen to be a priest, and need something that will really pay you for your services, I do not know anything better than to tell them that they will get to heaven by their benevolent actions, their deeds of charity, and *especially* their alms to the Catholic Church! And of course, you need to remind them that in their departing moments it will be *extremely useful* to leave a large sum of money for the benefit of the church, and much to the advantage of their souls! Oh, it is an excellent plan of picking their pockets! If men give in that way, they are giving to God, they say. It is a bald-faced lie! They are giving to *themselves*—seeking their own salvation! It is a pure system of selfishness from beginning to end, and he that lives to save himself is living with a mean purpose! I wonder how he can look himself in the face, and say, “God made me, and yet I am not living to His glory, but I am living to save myself.” I say, sir, that if your system could be worked out, and produce the best possible effect that could come of it, it would only be to reduce mankind into a race of *self-seeking men*, seeking self in a very fine garb, but still seeking self!

“How about faith?” you ask. Why, faith in Jesus Christ saves us from self! We believe in Him, and we are saved from that day, for we live not for *self*-salvation! We are saved, and now, out of love to Him who saved us, we live unto His praise and glory, this being our grand motive—that we might glorify Him, not seeking a reward, but, “As you have loved me, O ever loving Lord, so would I love You!” This is something better than selfishness; this is, in fact, salvation from self, which is no mean part of salvation from our sins. Pushing the matter still closer home, I would like to ask another question. You say that to tell a big evil sinner that God forgives him on the spot when he believes in Jesus is to encourage him in sin? Come then, and defend your hypothesis! Suppose that the man is led to believe that God has forgiven him; what will be the effect upon him? Think a little. Have you never heard of the effect of kindness upon men? Do you not believe in it? Some men are all for whips and chains; flog them; give them a term of penal servitude; exile them! That is the law, and it is supposed to be capable of working a wonderful reformation in their characters, but have you never heard of the effect of *kindness*? I will tell you a story of a Quaker. Isaac Hopper was in the streets of Philadelphia, and he heard a waiter swearing

awfully. This waiter waited upon him in a hotel and he swore there. “Well,” said Hopper, “I must stop this man’s swearing.” So he brought him up, (it was many years ago), before the Philadelphian court, which then had a law that anybody who cursed God should be fined. So Cain got fined. Some years afterwards Hopper was in Philadelphia, and he saw Cain, not in the white cravat of the waiter, but in rags. He had evidently been living a life of drunkenness; Hopper had desired this man’s good, so he said to the man, “Cain, you have not much improved since I saw you last.” No, he had not, and he had some bad ways. Hopper asked him if he did not remember when he had him brought before the Philadelphian court and fined for using bad language. Remember it?! He certainly did remember it! He would never forget the nasty trick that the Quaker had played on him! “Now,” Hopper said, “Friend Cain, I meant your good; I really did desire your good.” Cain said, “And afterwards I cursed at you dreadfully.” So Hopper put his hand into his pocket with all the calculation of business, and he said, “Friend Cain, you were fined so much, and the interest upon it since then is so much; I can assure you I only meant your good, and now I give you this back.” Then he proceeded to speak to him very kindly till big tears stood in Cain’s eyes. And Cain said, “After all, Mr. Hopper, there is something better in the world than I thought there was.” And it was the means of reclaiming the man; the fining did not do him good, as we generally believe it does on those of whom we speak as “worthless characters.” Kindness—that’s what set him right!

A more remarkable case was that of Penel, the master of the lunatic asylum in Paris, in the days of the convention. There were hundreds of people chained to the floor, and Penel sued the convention that they would allow him to set them loose. He proposed to let loose fifty furious savages first. Caithon, the president, said, “I will come down tomorrow, and see these creatures, and if you are concealing any of the enemies of the republic, death to you at the guillotine.” And when Caithon went down they howled at him, like so many wild beasts, and he said, “I think you are maddest of all of them, but you may do as you like, though I am sure you will be the victim of it.” There was one English captain in the house who had been chained there 40 years—chained down to the ground because he had got one of his hands loose and had killed a keeper—a savage, morose beast of the worst kind that could be. Penel went to him, and he said, “Captain, if I set you free, will you act like a rational being?” “Ah, that I would,” said the man, “but you are all afraid of me—all of you.” “No, I am not,” said Penel, “I have got these men here who could manage you very well, but I will trust you, if you behave yourself rationally.” Oh, he would behave very well, that he would—the very man who killed his keeper! And when his chains were taken from him he strove to stand, poor man, but for many minutes he could not because he had been chained down so long. At last he got up, and looked up at the sky, and could only say, “Beautiful! Beautiful! Beautiful!” And he became not only calm, quiet, and tractable, but made himself a sort of superintendent over the rest! I believe Penel was the means of bringing all the poor creatures that had been let loose, back to sober reason, and something like reasoning obedience of the laws under which they lived—simply by *kindness*. And has that been done by madmen? Why, it has been done by some of us who were worse than mad—mad with sin! We have trusted them, forgiven them, been kind to them, and conquered them! And do you believe if the everlasting God says to a sinner, “Now, you will destroy yourself if you go on; I am angry with your sin, and though I hate your sin, I do not hate you. I have laid your sin on Christ; believe it.” And will you think, if the man believes it, that he will rise up to be worse than he was before?

Human nature is bad enough, but after all, this is not the way of man! The cords of love hold us, and the bands of a man restrain us. I will ask you, sir, that makes the objection, if you could be met on the Tabernacle steps tonight, or at your own door by an angel who should say to you, “I have brought you this scroll fresh from the hands of the eternal God: on it is written, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn you; I have bought you with My precious blood: your sins, which are many, are all forgiven.’” sir, would the effect of that upon you be to make you live a worse life than you did before? You would be a devil—worse than a devil—if such were to be the consequence! But it could not be so. “I feel I must begin a new life”—that is what I want you to feel, and therefore I preach to you tonight, not as an angel with a scroll, but as a man, like yourself, with the Christ-inspired volume before me! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall have pardon for the past, and you shall, with the reception of that pardon, find a change come over your nature which shall

inspire you with nobler purposes, and make you another man than you are at present! I might thus continue to speak, but I refrain; if the objection is not driven away by my feeble sentences, may God drive it away by His mighty Spirit!

Now my closing effort shall be to show the comparative power of faith. Paul says that faith works. It works by God's love—not by dread or fear, but by *His love*. Oh, blessed machinery is this! love shall be the great communicator—the great band which connects the mighty engine of faith with our lives—faith which works by love! Do you ask how faith works by love? Why, when a man believes God's Testimony, and sees that notwithstanding all his offenses, God loves him, and has provided His own dear Son to be a ransom for him, the man says, "My views of God are changed. I never understood that God was like this; I thought that He was very angry with me, that He would utterly destroy me and that without remedy. "Has God given *me* His only-begotten Son, and did that only-begotten Son bear for me what I ought to have borne? Then I cannot be His enemy! It was ignorance of what He is that made me indifferent to Him; my indifference begat insolence, and that made me oppose Him. His love has come into my soul, now, and I see who God is; God is love! God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." The man's mind is, by that very fact changed in regard to God, and having affected this revolution of feeling, you have gone a long way towards changing the man's actual life. The next step after that is repentance. The man says, "Well, I struggled against a mighty God who had made laws which I have broken, and only knew that He would punish me. I feared the worst; I felt case-hardened. I said, 'I will go on, for there is no hope.' But now I perceive that God has never done anything towards me for which I should hate Him; He has never viewed me in a malicious spirit, but He has always regarded me with an eye to my good. I hate myself to think that I should have offended Him! Wretch that I am, that I should have lived 40 years denying the existence of One who has never forgotten me a single day! Wretch that I am, that I should have taken that name in vain which is a name above every name—the name that is to be my everlasting joy! O, my Father, my God, how could it be that I, Your child, should be Your foe? My Savior, my bleeding Savior, how was it that I could revile Your people, despise Your cross, and trample on Your blood? I grieve, for I have grieved You! I hate the sins that made You mourn! And now that I see that You forgive—I thank You."

There is a change, you see, of the view the man takes of God, and then a change in the views which he takes of his own actions, and he repents in dust and ashes when he discovers the love of God. Yes, and faith works by His love yet farther, for faith leads to the foot of the cross, and says, "Look there." And the soul stands and looks up! And as it looks, it lives! And as it lives, it loves! And as it loves, it weeps! And as it weeps, it again gazes upon Christ, and says, "Yes, He is the Son of God, and yet the greatest sufferer that ever lived! He was offended, yet He died! He it is whose laws were broken, yet the punishment of our sin was put on Him! And as we look into those wounds, and read those griefs, and as our eyes begin to penetrate within His flesh to see the heartbreak which He endured, and as the ear catches the sound of, "Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani," and as our heart gazes into His side, and sees His heart that was broken, we begin to love and weep—and love and weep again! And then we say to ourselves, "What should I do for Him who died to save my wretched soul?" Sin becomes hateful, and we ask, "How can I please Him? How can I serve Him?" Then we wish we could die for Him, and as He does not ask us to do that, we pray that we may *live* for Him! Love to Him becomes the strongest incentive, the mightiest impulse, and the motive power that sways our entire being! Oh, I wish you felt it to be so in your own souls! It has been so in some of us, and now, forever more to us, to live is Christ! Now for the love we bear to His name, Christ has become the great objective of our being! And so faith, leading us by the way of gratitude up to the standpoint of love, begets in us a desire to please Him, and also a desire to imitate Him—for love, somehow, always grows like its objective. You cannot love a thing without becoming something like it, in proportion to the force of love. And just in proportion as you love Jesus, you must become like He. Oh, objector, would it hurt the world if men were to grow like Christ? Whatever you may think about the religion we have taken from His lips, I know you cannot speak against the *life* which He lived! And if faith in Him will make men like He—and it *has* made them like He, and *is making* them like He every day—it cannot be an evil and a licentious thing! It must, in fact, be the greatest power for morality, the greatest strengthener of social law and order, and the very best principle a patriot might desire to spread throughout the nation in which he lives! Talk no more

about morality, I pray you! O bleeding Lamb, the best morality is love to You! And where is it but in those who trust You with their soul, their all-in-all?

You will always find that those who thus, out of gratitude, desire to imitate Christ, inevitably become lovers of their fellow men. When we imitate Christ, we cannot be men-haters. To hate is not Christ, but the very opposite of Christ; our blessed Lord and Master is no man-hater. When I listen to a cynic, I know that Christ is not of his school; when I read sharp and cutting satire; when I have heard men spoken of in terms which make them to be brutes—at least a few dozen generations back, I know that that doctrine was not learned of Christ! My Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, was the poor man's friend! Never a syllable fell from His lips which would make a tyrant feel at ease in His despotism; never did He utter a syllable that would make the oppressive master feel that he had any right to tread down his workmen; never did He utter a line that would make the workman feel that he had the right to be envious of those who possessed more talents or enjoyed higher privileges than he had. His teaching was Justice, and His life was love! If you ask me for a man that all might respect—such a man as one would wish all men to be with whom we dwell—I can only commend you to the person and character of my Lord! And if you are to become imitators of Him, the husband will be the kindest husband, and the most loving of fathers! The mother will be the most tender and amiable of mothers, and of wives! If you have been forgiven by Christ, and so love Him mightily and imitate Him diligently—well, you will be such men and women that no pastor need be ashamed to say, “They belong to my flock!” And no fellow Christians need be ashamed to acknowledge you as one of their fraternity! Oh, beloved, there is growing in this country, I fear, more and more a feeling of alienation, the one from the other! I cannot speak as some do, of “the good old times,” for I believe the times were never as old as they are now, and never so good! But I do grieve to see that different classes are positioned against each other; it will be ill for our country if this jealousy goes on, for rivalries provoke resentments. God has given us preeminence among the sons of men in many respects, and if the house would not be divided against itself, it would prosper. If every one of us will resolve to love his neighbor as himself, and to seek his brother's good, each one seeking and satisfied with that which is just and equal, whether occupying the higher or the lower, or the middle place, from how many districts, manifold distractions would be averted! Yes, but if we will do more, and be generous, and kind, and loving, we shall be benefactors indeed, and bless our country! I do not know by what process we can be brought to do this so surely, and so reasonably as by our believing in Jesus Christ! Feeling gratitude and love to Him, then imitating Him, and then becoming like He, we shall verify in our triumph over the world, the virtue of that faith whereby, alone, the victory can be won!

One more remark: if you would have faith in Christ as the ground of justification, do not mix up this gift in your thoughts with anything else that has nothing at all to do with it. “Neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision.” These outward distinctions are of no consequence; they might have made a great difference at another time, and under other circumstances, but “from now on know we no man after the flesh.” “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” Now, there may be, and most likely there are not a few of my hearers who are inquiring the way of salvation, but cannot understand it because they distract themselves with thoughts about themselves that are totally irrelevant. I think I can read the thought which is just now passing through the minds of many of you. “Oh,” you say, “I would like a few minutes conversation with the pastor!” But why? Have you any questions to ask? Is there any matter I have failed to make plain? Do you not understand, one and all of you, that entirely irrespective of anything about your birth, your bringing up, or your business, the simple direction of the gospel is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Suppose I listened to you? It would not be very difficult for me to conjecture what everyone would have to say. “Well,” says one, “I wanted to tell you, sir, that I was trained in the Established Church, and christened before I was three months old.” That means nothing! “Alas, sir!” says another, “You could not imagine the disadvantages of my childhood; my parents never went to church; they never had me sprinkled, or dedicated, or anything else. I was reared like a heathen!” Well, that is no detriment—it means nothing! “Why, sir,” says another, “I could repeat the Catechism, and I knew by heart all the collects before I was four years old.” “Alas!” says another, “I *never* was taught *anything*!” Know assuredly, my friends, that there is but one salvation for white men, or black men, for Pharisees,

or publicans! When you believe in Jesus, you are born-again! Every trace of your former self is wiped out! I would that you counted yourselves dead and buried, that you might live the new life, and say with the Apostle, “The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.”

Some of you have been converted during the last few weeks; I hope a good many of you have. Some of you have been converted to God in this place. There are here present, I doubt not, those who have been brought to believe in Christ under various agencies piously and prayerfully conducted at this time in our metropolis. We greet you cordially. Our adversaries watch you narrowly. They say, “Well, but will they stand? Will they last?” “Is their conversion worth anything?” Now, I do pray that you who profess to have found Christ, do not make a sham of it; do let it be salvation from sin that you have. Salvation from hell—is that what you want? That is *not* the salvation you ought to try after. It is salvation from *sin*. That will bring salvation from hell! You know, every thief would like to get salvation from going to prison, but that would not be of any particular use to him. The salvation that is worth having is the salvation from *thieving* any more. Mr. Thief, if you get *that*, you will get salvation from prison, too! Salvation from hell is not the issue, but salvation from *sinning*! Now let us see how you live, you converts; you go home, sir, and growl at your wife. You go home, madam, to be snappish with your servant. You go home, housemaid, to be slovenly in your duties. You go home, working man, resolved to give half a day’s work for a whole day’s wage. You go home, master, to act the tyrant over your men. Well, you have been converted, have you? I pray God to *undo* such a conversion, and begin again with you! There are lots of people who need to be *unconverted* before they are converted—to have the rubbish they have built up themselves pulled down before Christ can begin!

Suppose you have some freehold ground, and it has an old remarkable building on it; with a new edifice in view, you must clear away every vestige of the former house. There are plenty of people who have a good-for-nothing conversion that needs sweeping away before God does anything with them. Pray to the Lord in this way—“Lord, I beseech You save me from my sin; let me have a perfect faith which works; not a faith that sends me to sleep, not a faith that gives me a dose of opium, and says, ‘There, your conscience was like an aching tooth, and would not stop aching, but I have stopped it.’” Now, ask the Lord to extract that which causes pain; to take away that which causes the mischief—not to give you quietness only for a time. Ask for a right spirit, and a new heart, and remember, you must be born-again. Though it is quite true as we say and sing, “Only believe and you shall be saved,” yet if that, “only believing” is of a sort which merely asserts without intelligence of the mind, without emotion of the heart, there is nothing in it! It leaves you what you were before—it is not the faith, pure and simple, that will save your soul! Evidently it will not save you, for it has left you still slaves to your sin. Real childlike faith in Jesus Christ saves us because it works by His love. The Lord grant you to possess this precious prize which we persistently preach—the faith which works by love.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 3:20.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—351, 544, 406.

[The original title of this sermon was *A Remonstrance and a Rejoinder*.]

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